

NORTH PROVIDENCE SCHOOL COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE SESSION

September 22, 2004

The Executive Session met in Executive Session on September 22, 2004 at 6:30 pm, in the Administrators' Conference Room at the North Providence High School for the purpose of discussing pending litigation.

Members present were Chairman Norato, Mrs. Reall, Mr. Wilkes, Mr. Cataldi, Mr. DaSilva and Mr. Marciano. Also present were Superintendent Ottaviano and Attorney Scungio.

Mr. Scungio began by discussing Thomas Sweeney's invoices totaling approximately \$12,000. Per John Fleming he will be paid immediately after the election in November, barring political or financial catastrophe. Mr. Cataldi asked if he had been paid anything yet, Mr. Scungio replied that the Mayor is uncomfortable paying him after he stated to the public that he would not pay him. Mr. Scungio will write memo to Mr. Fleming confirming payment will be made.

Next Dr. Ottaviano updated members of the Committee on the reconciled budget and her Action Plan for balancing the budget – the two main items being Blue Cross and Special Education.

Blue Cross – Mayor entered into a 3 year contract without the School Committee voting on it. Mrs. Reall pointed out that, per Mr. Sweeney, this area is part of the members' fiduciary responsibility.

Mr. Scungio explained that if there is a deficit attributable to Blue Cross, the School Committee is not responsible, the Town is. He advised that the School Committee get control of this item before next year.

Mr. DaSilva pointed out that School Department rates are high because they are included with the Police Department and Fire Department. The majority of sizable claims are on the municipal side rather than school department.

Dr. Ottaviano explained that before she can provide final numbers on the budget, she needs to get the Town Hall's numbers from Mr. DeStefano.

Next Mr. Scungio updated the Committee on the Ursillo matter. Ms. Ursillo's appointment as Special Education Director in Narragansett was going before their Committee and if she were appointed it would

be good for North Providence, because her attorney would probably dismiss the appeal before the Department of Education.

6:58 pm meeting was adjourned to open session.

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The North Providence School Committee met on September 22, 2004 at 7:05 pm in the Library at the North Providence High School. Members present were Chairman Norato, Mrs. Reall, Mr. Wilkes, Mr. Marciano, Mr. DaSilva, and Mr. Cataldi. Also present were Dr. Ottaviano, Attorney Scungio, Ms. Hickey, Mr. Milazzo and Mr. Azar.

The meeting began by saluting the flag. Next, Chairman Norato asked for a moment of silence. Chairman Norato introduced Vito Martinelli as the School Committee-Elect for District I.

The first item on the Agenda was Correspondence. There being none. The next item on the Agenda was the Superintendent's Report.

Superintendent Ottaviano recommended approval of the Monthly Financial Report. Motion by Mr. Cataldi, seconded by Mr. Wilkes. Mr. Cataldi asked if money would be reimbursed for the Textbook Loan Program. Dr. Ottaviano confirmed that it would be. Mr. Azar will keep the Committee informed. The Motion was then carried to approve.

Next Superintendent Ottaviano recommended approval of the Reconciled Budget for 2004/05 with what she feels are realistic cuts. Motion by Mr. Wilkes, seconded by Mr. Cataldi and carried to approve.

Next was Administrators Contracts. Per Chairman Norato, this item will be continued to the October meeting when Dr. Pallotta would be present.

Next was Public Comments on Agenda Items 3-5. The first being Robert Aiello, 18 Barry Court. Mr. Aiello asked which Administrator Contracts were coming up and did they include raises. Chairman Norato explained that this issue was deferred to the October meeting, but the contracts were for Mr. Azar, Mr. Milazzo, the Truant Office, Ms. Pellegrino and George Paquette in technology. Dr. Ottaviano explained contracts are a line item in the budget under salaries and benefits

Next Bill Casey asked Dr. Ottaviano what the cost is for the Middle School graduations. Dr. Ottaviano answered \$4000 covers all costs. Dr. Ottaviano added that the School Department is constantly applying for grants and doing fundraisers through the schools and PTO's.

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Mr. Cataldi commented that he and the Mayor are in discussions regarding revenue raising. Presently the Town owns the schools and properties. Consideration is being given to renaming some schools and sports complexes, putting up billboards at schools and renting out classrooms at the High School. Mr. Wilkes and Mr. Cataldi favor aggressively pursuing tuition from out of district students' families. Will vote on bid from collection attorney in near future.

Next Mr. Medina questioned the third year of the principals' contracts regarding the ratio system. Mr. Medina is looking for hard numbers

and does not want the tax payers to have to face the unknown in the future.

Next Ed Rendine from 8 Briarwood Drive asked how much it costs to educate a student in the North Providence public schools. Dr. Ottaviano responded – little over \$5,000/student (non-special ed). Mr. Rendine then went on to discuss bussing and Chairman Norato explained that that issue will be discussed under Requests to Address Committee.

Mr. Aiello again spoke and asked if, since there were only 6 members present, would there be any issues voted on. Chairman Norato explained that it would be addressed if it became an issue.

Next Chairman Norato went on to Requests to Address the Committee and recognized Michael Rollins who suggested the school department do active fundraising. Dr. Ottaviano explained that the Commercial Activities Law restricts fundraising, but will look into possibilities and address the issue at the next meeting.

Next James Grande of 12 Joyce Drive addressed the Committee with concerns about the bus route(s) for private and parochial school students. He requests that, for safety reasons, the routes be reinstated to what they were last year. Mr. Grande argued that if the public school routes were reinstated at the August meeting, the private school routes should also be reinstated. Dr. Ottaviano

explained that, in the case of the public schools, routes were totally eliminated – causing many students to have to walk to school. However, the private school routes were merely consolidated, so no student was without transportation.

Mr. Grande claimed his child’s walk is too long to get to the bus stop. Dr. Ottaviano explained the procedure for laying out the routes, which includes reviewing applications from parents. Mr. Grande went on to comment that in the past his child was picked up at 7:10 am and was dropped off (at the corner of his street) at 3:00 -3:05 pm. This year all the children meet

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at the bus stop at 7:00 am and don’t get back to the stop until 3:30 pm. Mr. Grande asked what the cost is for a bus route. Mr. Milazzo responded - \$230/bus/day. He also explained that, using a list of the applications for transportation to private schools, a one mile radius is

used to plot stops, and noted that Mr. Grande actually lives .6 mi from his child's stop, and added that public school students have to walk 1.0 mi to school.

Mr. Grande claims the private school students are being discriminated against. And claims the school department is not considering the conditions of the sidewalks the children have to walk on.

Dr. Ottaviano explained that, before a route is established, the Police Chief must approve it. Mr. Grande feels his son's stop could be moved closer to his home. Dr. Ottaviano explained that if she did that for him, she'd have to do it for every child and the routes would take longer.

Chairman Norato next recognized Joseph Salvatore of 18 Carriage Way. His son is a student at Providence Country Day and claims the Town bus service is inappropriate. Questions the safety of the route his child has to walk to get to the bus stop as well as the location of the stop. He requests that the bus go into Lee's Plat.

Mr. Milazzo suggested Mr. Salvatore's son walk through Birchwood School and down Birchwood Drive as a safer, more direct route to the bus stop. Mr. Salvatore responded that that was not acceptable. Mr. Milazzo offered to take a closer look at the bus route.

Mr. Salvatore also questioned Dr. Ottaviano's response to the cost per student in the public schools. He argued that the Department of Ed gives \$9,878 as an average per student number (2000/2001). Dr. Ottaviano explained that they group special education students in that so the figures are higher than actual cost for non-special ed students.

Next Mrs. Maren Miller addressed the committee regarding bussing. She objects to the school department's policy of plotting a 1 miles radius using a straight line. Students cannot walk a straight line through people's yards and buildings.

Mr. Stephen Miller of 54 Barbara Ann Dr said his two daughters' route is inadequate. His children have to walk uphill on winding roads with no sidewalks for .75 mile. Cannot see why they cannot be picked up at the door. Claims the school department chose the "minimalist" way of setting up the routes. Mr. Miller also raised the safety issue. Claims the Town is not transporting the children safely. Some students will get home in the dark. More effort should go into serving the people of North Providence.

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Next Ms. Malinda Coletta addressed the committee regarding transportation to Bay View. She stated that her daughter has a 2 hour ride home. She claimed that her daughter is dismissed at 2:30 pm and doesn't get dropped off until 4:30 pm. For three years she was getting home at 3:30 pm. She also addressed Mr. Milazzo asking him why she has called him several times but hasn't received a call back from him. She also claimed that Mr. Milazzo suggested she take her daughter to school herself. Mr. Milazzo denied that saying during their conversation Ms. Coletta was on speaker phone. Ms. Coletta then slammed her daughter's backpack on the table in front of Mr. Wilkes and suggested the committee pass it down and asked if any of them would like to walk 1 mile carrying it.

Mr. Cataldi commented that all parents share the concern about heavy backpacks. Also recognizing some valid concerns but that the children could not all be picked up at the corner of their streets. Some have to walk a little further than others to get to a central stop. He assured Ms. Coletta and others that Mr. Milazzo and Dr. Ottaviano will take a look at reconstructing some stops. Safety is the top priority.

Ms. Coletta concluded saying Ms. McKenzie was unable to attend the meeting.

Chairman Norato then read a statement addressed to the private school parents. The District is grappling with a deficit and had to make some difficult decisions, which included transportation, because the Town has not given the School Department sufficient funding. Administrators will pay 10% co-pay for medical coverage, middle school graduations have been eliminated, as well as certain sports. Teachers will also be asked to make similar sacrifices.

He also assured parents that the Superintendent will be seeking alternative ways to reduce time spent on the bus.

He thanked all present for their concern and asked that they stay informed and come to budget meetings to advocate for education.

Next was Resignations. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended approval of the resignations of 1) Fred Morrison – High School Hockey Coach – effective August 31, 2004, motion by Mr. Wilkes, seconded by Mrs. Reall, and carried to approve; 2) Stephen Morrison – Assistant High School Hockey Coach – effective September 9, 2004, motion by Mrs. Reall, seconded by Mr. Wilkes, and carried to approve; and 3) Patricia Silva, Marieville Yearbook Advisor – effective July 16, 2004 -, motion by Mr. Cataldi, seconded by Mr. Wilkes, and carried to approve..

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Next was Retirements. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended approval of the retirement of Rosalie Lisi, Crossing Guard – effective September 7, 2004, motion (with regret) by Mrs. Reall, seconded by Mr. Wilkes, and carried to approve.

Next was the Layoff Recisions. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended approval of the recision of the layoff of Maureen O'Donnell, Teacher Assistant, motion by Helen Reall, seconded by Mr. Wilkes, and carried to approve.

Next was Appointments. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended approval of the Appointments of the following: Michelle Poirier, School Nurse/Teacher– effective September 1, 2004, motion by Mr. DaSilva, seconded by Mrs. Reall, and carried to approve; and Diane Mooney Rench, Crossing Guard – effective September 27, 2004,

motion by Mr. DaSilva, seconded by Mrs. Reall, and carried to approve.

Next was Old Business. There being none, the next item on the Agenda was Use of Property.

Superintendent Ottaviano recommended approval. Motion by Mr. Wilkes, seconded by Mr. Cataldi who asked Mr. Milazzo that nothing other than Karate School be scheduled at the High School for February 13, 2005. Mr. Cataldi also pointed out that no use of property request was submitted by the High School for their October 2, 2004 breakfast, but would like to include it in the vote. Mr. DaSilva pointed out a conflict with basketball and soccer using the same gym and asked Mr. Milazzo to work it out. Motion by Mr. Marciano, seconded by Mrs. Reall, and carried to approve.

Next was Approval of Bills. Superintendent Ottaviano recommended approval of bills in the amount of \$733,942,85. Motion by Mr. DaSilva, seconded by Mrs. Reall, and carried to approve.

Next was Approval of Minutes. Chairman Norato recommended approval of the August 25, 2004 Executive Session minutes. Motion by Mr. DaSilva, seconded by Mr. Cataldi and carried to approve. Chairman Norato then recommended approval of the August 25, 2004 Regular Session minutes. Motion by Mr. Cataldi, seconded by Mr. DaSilva, and carried to approve.

Next was Public Comments on Agenda Items 7-12. Chairman Norato asked that one person speak at a time. The first person to speak was Emily Mendillo of 46 Wasiota Avenue, who did not voice any complaints, but rather requested that her two small sons' bus stop be moved from what is an unsafe spot (CVS) to a safe spot.

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Mr. Marciano commented that he learned a lot at the meeting. He assured parents that something would be done; he is concerned about the safety issue.

Next Mr. Salvatore spoke again commenting that he feels public school students do not have to walk as far as the private school students.

Mr. Wilkes the complimented parents on their attendance. Adding

that he agrees that young children should not have to walk on and cross main roads.

Mr. Salvadore added that he doesn't understand why the buses cannot go into the neighborhoods.

Next Josephine Wilbur commented that her daughter goes to Bay View and has no pass. Has gotten no call back and is concerned about her daughter's safety having to walk 1.22 miles to stop.

Next Mrs. Fanaro voiced concerns that her 5 year old daughter is on the same bus as high school students. She tried to contact the School Department but got no response. Chairman Norato assured her that her daughter would not be on a bus with high school students.

Next Mr. Aiello asked who is responsible if a child is hurt. Mr. Scungio responded by saying the parents are responsible until the child is in the care and custody of the bus driver when they board the bus.

Next Alison Goldberg, a Bay View student, addressed the committee commenting that she has to cross two main streets carrying books, sports equipment and a coat.

Mr. Grande again asked Mr. Scungio who's liable for safety on

private property. Mr. Scungio reiterated that the parents are responsible until the bus driver takes custody. Mr. Grande added that he had attended a budget meeting and the Superintendent had done an admirable job.

Mr. Wilkes added that two years ago the Town Council wanted to cut \$2 million from the School Department but refused to \$25,000 from the municipal budget.

Chairman Norato assured parents that he will direct the Superintendent to look into the busing issue and report findings to the Committee.

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Mr. Grande then asked who has the last say in the matter. Mr. Scungio explained that the Superintendent makes the decision, which can then be appealed to the School Committee, and then to the Department of Education.

Mr. Salvatore asked for a time frame. Superintendent Ottaviano assured him she would begin immediately. Mr. Milazzo agreed to a few days. Superintendent Ottaviano stated that parents would be notified according to the applications on file.

An unidentified woman then spoke about the bus route issue. Her husband is ill and cannot have daughter on bus for extended periods. Chairman Norato assured her that 2 hours is unacceptable and will have the problem resolved. Chairman Norato thanked all for coming on behalf of the Committee.

The next item on the Agenda was Pending Business. There being none, Motion by Mr. Wilkes to Adjourn, seconded by Mr. Cataldi and carried to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

David Wilkes